Chess!

Storyline - some new details

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These are details to the proposal of an alternative storyline for the musical Chess by Tim Rice, Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus already published by the author.

I. General Remarks

1) title - as you can see from above, Chess takes an exclamation mark, just when someone says "Check!" (german "Schach!")

2) Florence rebecomes of hungarian descent (see scene 1 below). Her names is pronounced hungarian style Vassy = Vaasy

3) Prolog: there is a wonderful interview online available of Anatoly Karpov. Karpov says that he finds chess so beautiful and he is sad for people who cannot play and cannot experience that beauty. If Mr Karpov allows it, this will be the opening of the musical.

4) Location: Chess! comes back to Meran (not MeraNO), the song just goes Mera-an, Mera-an.

5) The infamous song "Der kleine Franz" is replaced by "Is an Almhüttn mei Häusei" by Martin Schwab (late bavarian composer)

6) Before Bangkok, a new short dialog between Florence and Walter: Walter tells Florence that Anatoly must apply for US citizenship otherwise the US cannot protect him abroad.

7) "One Night in Bangkok" needs complete rephrasing due to Freddy's stay in Thailand and his acquaintance of SE-asian culture, in particular sexual culture.
That our repressed western culture, be it english or french (yes they are the same, but more insidious and soul-destructing) is a sham and a perversion is evindenced by 99.999% porn traffic on the internet.
It would be good to send the actual singer/actor on a tour of SE Asia.

8) Dialog Molokow-Anatoly: the scene is flanked on either side by Marine guards.
Anatoly does **not** obtain the liberation of his family after the match

9) For the final interview Freddy-Anatoly: Freddy is *not* informed about Anatoly's situation (blackmail by USSR to not play chess). Hence Freddy's surprise at Anatoly's disappearance from chess.

II. Scenes

Scene 1

persons:
alpine scenery:
Anatoly, the challenger
Oleksy, his assistant
Vladimir, KGB spook

intel scenery
Walter, CIA spook
John, his assistant

After the prolog (see above 3), projection of alpine landscape.

Music: the slow theme of Scherzo of Anton Bruckner's 4th symphony.
First played on the original instrumentation, then picked up by whistlers (3?) onstage, but in the dark and invisible.
This gives a musical backdrop like birds chirping

dialogs

Oleksy: This time I'm on your side, but next time, I'll kick your ass and I'll do it right

Anatoly: I am terrified

O: You know that I was sick during Interzonals

A: I know, that overdue caviar.

Do you feel better now?

O: Asshole

A: Oh, here comes Vladimir

O: The KGB's eyes and ear

V: You are ready for the fight?

A: Couldn't be more

V: You have the entire Nation and all our secret analysis behind you.

A: Once on the board, you're all alone

O: Against the man who has single-handedly defeated all our Grandmasters so far

V: Not so single-handedly any more

A + O together (loud): WHO'S THAT ?

V: His partner, Florence Vassy (pronounce Vaasy)

O: Isn't she just his lover?

V: We don't know, but she must have exceptional cognitive skills.

A: Such as ?

V: She learned Russian in a fortnight and speaks it quite fluently

A: Took me all my childhood

V: Do you know how they met?

O: Sure, but tell us anyway !

V: At a Blitz tournament where she defeated him, repeatedly

A: Do you have the notes of these games?

V: Sadly, no.

You would already have seen them

A: Sure

O: If she is so gifted, what is she doing with that Trumper guy?

V: You know, in the States, when you don't have the money and no family connections, you just have the choice between Hooker and Cheerleader, depending on your looks

O: Is she good-looking?

V: You want to meet her? We can arrange that

O: Would be a change from Tolya

(To Anatoly) Sorry Pal, that Svetlana couldn't come along.

Travel regulation for party members!

A: You should invite her to the Soviet Union. We value performance, nor pedigree

This way, she can practice her russian and can take care of Lyosha. (points to Oleksy)

ABRUPT SILENCE (the birds stop singing instantly)

V: That sounds crazy but it is actually

V+O together A GOOD IDEA!

INTEL scenery

A spotlight shines up showing Walter and John, with earphones, eavesdropping on the Russians from some Intel location.
The alpine scenery is dimmed and the Russians not moving

John: You hear that, Chief?

Walter: Yes, and I don't like it

J: What, the girl working for the Russkis?

W: Right.

J: She ain't defence.

All she can do is give them a few moves

W: Nonsense !

She's american and they will learn as much from her as about us.

J: Is Vassy (*pronounce Vaasy*) so american ?

W: Her granpa came over from Hungary and she hails from Milwaukee

J: Prost !

W: You're welcome.

Now get me headquarters, move it !

The spotlight turns off, alpine scenery is lit and the birds resume their singing.
Anatoly, Oleksy and Vladimir leave the scene.
The whistlers who remained in the dark are now lit and become visible to the public to get their deserved applause.

Bangkok Interview Scene

persons:

Amanda News anchor

Freddy Chess expert

Anatoly Chess champion

setting

We are in a TV studio with Amanda and Freddy present behind a table

spotlight on Amanda

A: World News live from Bangkok and the Chess World Championship

We bring you quality information and just as Indie races have Hall of Famers as commentators, I am here with the foremost expert, former chess world champion Freddy Trumper

Spotlight on both Amanda and Freddy

A: How are you doing?

F: Am doing fine, how are you

A: Fine. Say, it came quickly about, this championship.
Only one year since your encounter.
How come? Aren't there regulations?

F: That has been tjhe subject of endless debates.
It was not unusual that the defeated champion had the right to a rematch after one year.
Max Euwe had his tenure shortened this way

A: Max Oi???

F: Nevermind. That was before the war

A: Which one?

F: Since then, my good friend Mikhail Tal fell victim to this habit at the pawns

of the old Botchnwinnit

A: Got it. But, the former champion is you and it should be you and not a new challenger

F: You know, the USSR is to chess what the US is to Basketball

and let's be nice and call it a variation

A: That's complicated

F: Chess is a complicated game

A: And you can discuss that with your peer

Please welcome chess world champion Anatoly Sergeiyevsky!

Anatoly comes in and they all get seated, Anatoly and Freddy facing each other, Amanda on the side

F: Well, happy to meet you again, my Fellow American

An: Not so fast, I'm still Russsian

F: Sure, know plenty of those in Baltimore. Say, no one has played you since a year.

What is going on?

An: I have to keep my forces for the championship.

F: Sure. But, seriously. You are Chess' prime ambassador.
The other players want to test your mettle. You owe that to the chess world.

An: I am up against an entire nation here. I have no leeway to give anything away.

F: Brings back memories.
And when they can't beat you, they kill you as they did to Alexander Alyekhin
Well, my fellow american

An: I told you that I am Russian

F: Got it but you did not just ask for a Green Card, you demanded political asylum .
That is a statement, a statement of values.
Allow me just one last question:
Which flag will be on your side of the board during this championship?

An: (in a lower voice) The american flag

F: Thank you, my Fellow American! I wish you luck !

Spotlight turns to Amanda to close the sequence

Am: This is World News from Bangkok.
I am Amanda Breitenstein and we will soon bring you more

(Offstage) CUT!

Freddy and Anatoly get up and Anatoly turns to leave

Freddy: Hey, hang around a little, fellow american!
If you're still interested in chess, I've got something for you

Anatoly: Sure am

Freddy: Novikov's habit of playing the knight in the Indian Defence at the 8th move gives you the opportunity to slide over to a favorable endgame of the scandinavian opening by the h-pawn, followed by a bishop move. You'll figure out the rest yourself.
If that can be of any help.

(Get a real chaess expert to get all that right)

Anatoly remains silent, thinking, looks to the ground, then looks up and says:

Let's bury the past

Freddy stretches out his hand and replies: Let's bury the past.

They both shake hands, not long, and part, each one to another side.

Walter comes in and Freddy walks up to him:

F: I think you didn't tell me all about our friend

W: I didn't

Bangkok Hotel Scene

Hotel room stage, Anatoly at a chess board trying out what Freddy has told him

A: What a formidable player that is.

He sits back, melancolically. Fetched a small glass and pours himself some vodka.

Spotlight on INTEL stage, with Henry and Walter present
There is an overhead screen showing Anatoly from a surveillance camera

W: You've got something for our friend?

H: The project is under way

W: Don't wait until his brain is drowned in vodka

H: We had to let him simmer until his stocks are at zero.

Plus, we owed Freddy that little revenge.

W: Revenge of sorts

Scene ends

Russian arrival in Bangkok

That is basically the "Russian machine" in Thai setting

Last scene

Anatoly receives a call from the hotel clerk, telling him that some russian people want to see him. When he hears that it's Novikov, he allows them to come up.
Oleksy brings Anatoly's parents, brother and sister directly into the hotel room. They are all finely dressed in colorful Russian folkloric summer gown. (Summers are very hot in Russia.)
The whole lighting imperceptibly rises from greyish to more and more vivid colors until the final quartet.